



Truly Alive | Youth and Family
Foundation Inc.

WELLNESS TOOLKIT FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS



**SUPPORTING BIPOC STUDENTS
ON THEIR ACADEMIC JOURNEY**

Created by Truly Alive Youth and Family Foundation Inc. (TAYFFI) with funding support by Government of Canada's Supporting Students Learning Program

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	1
Stress	5
Strategies for achieving academic wellness	7
Mental wellness	8
Physical wellness	9
Social wellness	10
Financial wellness	11
Summary	12
Templates	13
References	15



INTRODUCTION

This wellness toolkit is your guide to thriving academically and nurturing your well-being as a newcomer Black, Indigenous, or Person of Color (BIPOC) youth. It's designed with you in mind, offering a wealth of resources, guidance, and self-care practices. We understand the challenges you may face, from burnout to stress and mental health concerns, and we're here to help you navigate your academic journey with confidence. With this toolkit, you can not only survive but truly thrive in your educational pursuits.

WHAT IS ACADEMIC WELLNESS?

Academic wellness is more than just grades. It's about your overall well-being, including mental and emotional health, physical fitness, and building social connections. All of these factors are essential for your success in your educational journey in Canada.



WHY IS ACADEMIC WELLNESS IMPORTANT TO BIPOC YOUTH ?

As a BIPOC youth in a new country, you are more likely to face a unique set of challenges in your academic journey that your non-BIPOC counterparts may not have to deal with.

SOME OF THE CHALLENGES INCLUDE:

social integration

HOUSING CHALLENGES

LANGUAGE BARRIERS

cultural differences

ACADEMIC WORKLOAD

access to resources

Differences in Educational System

SEASONAL AFFECTIVE DISORDER (SAD)



Language barriers:

If English or French is not your first language, you may initially struggle with the language barrier. This can affect your ability to understand lectures, participate in discussions, and complete assignments.

Academic workload

The academic workload can be quite demanding, requiring strong time management and organizational skills.

Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD)

Also known as seasonal depression, SAD can affect individuals during specific seasons, often prevalent in winter due to reduced daylight. It's worth noting that SAD is not exclusive to BIPOC students.

Housing challenges

Finding the right place to call home can sometimes be a bit challenging. You might be new to the local housing market, have limited funds for deposits, or lack a credit history.

New educational system

The Canadian education system may differ from the system in your home country, which could leave you feeling overwhelmed. These variations may be in the teaching methods, assessment techniques, and expectations for student participation.

Cultural Differences

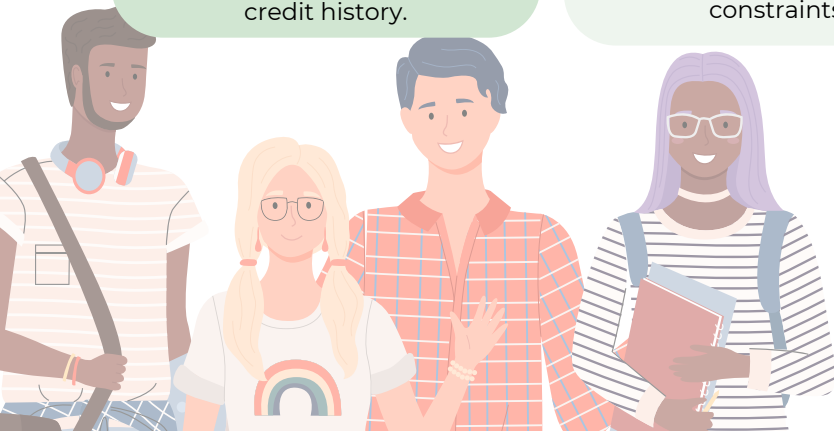
You may also experience cultural shocks related to classroom etiquette, interactions with teachers/professors, and collaborative learning.

Social integration:

It is very common to feel homesick, lonely, or isolated from others, as it may take time to build social networks and friendships. This can make it hard to adjust to your new environment.

Access to resources

In some cases, you might face challenges accessing resources such as textbooks or research materials due to financial constraints.



Emotional
Regulation

Enhanced
Learning
Experience

Improved mental
health and emotional
well-being

BENEFITS OF ACADEMIC WELLNESS

Reduced
stress and
anxiety

Long-term
success

Healthy
relationships
and social
support

Improved
Academic
Performance

Personal
Growth

STRESS

Academic stress, arising from factors like heavy workloads, competition, and high expectations, affects students both physically and emotionally. While it can sometimes be a source of motivation, chronic stress poses health risks. Identifying stress symptoms is crucial for effective management. Acknowledging and addressing these symptoms is vital for maintaining academic well-being. We provided a checklist to help you recognize some signs of stress. Tally the items checked in the checklist to identify your stress levels. **Seeking support, practicing stress management, and maintaining a balanced lifestyle are key to managing academic stress effectively and ensuring long-term health and success.**



STUDENT STRESS CHECKLIST

PHYSICAL SIGNS OF STRESS

- Frequent headaches or migraines
- Fatigue or chronic tiredness
- Insomnia or excessive sleeping
- Increase or decrease in appetite
- Frequent illness or weakened immune system

EMOTIONAL AND BEHAVIORAL SIGNS

- Social withdrawal or isolation
- Change in social activities
- Feeling overwhelmed or helpless
- Increased irritability, mood swings, or emotional sensitivity
- Loss of interest in activities previously enjoyed
- Increased reliance on unhealthy coping mechanisms (e.g. alcohol, drugs)
- Anxiety, panic attacks, or excessive worry

COGNITIVE INDICATORS OF STRESS

- Decreased academic performance
- Difficulty retaining information or memory loss
- Difficulty concentrating or making decisions
- Constant negative self-talk or self-doubt
- Procrastination or avoidance of academic tasks
- Increased perfectionism or fear of failure
- Feeling overwhelmed by the academic workload

TIME AND SELF-MANAGEMENT CLUES

- Constantly feeling rushed or running out of time
- Difficulty prioritizing tasks or managing deadlines
- Feeling like you don't have enough time for assignments or studying
- Neglecting self-care activities such as exercise, relaxation, or hobbies
- Frequently feeling overwhelmed by a long to-do list

INTERPERSONAL OR SOCIAL SIGNS

- Strained relationships with peers, teachers, or family members
- Decreased participation in social events or activities
- Lack of interest or engagement in discussions or group work
- Increased conflicts or arguments with others
- Feeling misunderstood or unsupported by friends or family

OF ITEMS
CHECKED

STRESS
LEVEL

0-7

LOW

7-14

MODERATE

15-21

HIGH

22+

VERY HIGH

Occasionally experiencing these signs is normal, but if they persist, it may signal academic stress needing attention and support.

STRATEGIES FOR ACHIEVING ACADEMIC WELLNESS

Academic wellness goes beyond academic achievements. In this guide, we will be looking at **how BIPOC students can manage stress and achieve academic wellness holistically by prioritizing their mental well-being, physical health, social connections, and financial well-being.**

It's essential to remember that you don't need to tackle everything on these checklists all at once. **The goal is not perfection but rather progress and self-care.** Every small step you take toward trying out these strategies can make a positive difference in your well-being.



MENTAL WELLNESS CHECKLIST

Mental well-being, also referred to as **mental health**, is a **critical aspect of overall health and wellness**. It involves how we think, feel, and behave, as well as our ability to cope with stress, handle challenges, and maintain positive relationships.

HERE ARE SOME PRACTICAL TIPS TO HELP YOU BOOST YOUR MENTAL HEALTH AS A STUDENT:

- Have a schedule** that includes time for studies, relaxation, hobbies and social activities
- Always have a copy** of your academic calendar and course outlines to stay on top of deadlines
- Set realistic goals** and celebrate your achievements
- Incorporate** short breaks in your study sessions
- Practice mindfulness** and meditation
- Practice **Journaling**
- Break tasks** into smaller, manageable parts and tackle them one step at a time
- Limit screen time** on computers, cellphones and other devices
- Engage in hobbies** to relax and take your mind off academic stress
- Limit caffeine** and stimulant intake
- Avoid** comparing yourself to others
- Spend time** outdoors in nature
- Engage** in positive self-talk
- Seek counseling** if you need to talk to someone


PHYSICAL WELLNESS

Physical wellness refers to a person's physical health and their ability to maintain a **balanced and healthy lifestyle**. Positive physical habits can help decrease stress. It also plays a crucial role in your ability to thrive academically and in your overall well-being.



**HEALTHY BODY + HEALTHY MIND
= HEALTHY YOU**

TIPS TO STAY PHYSICALLY HEALTHY

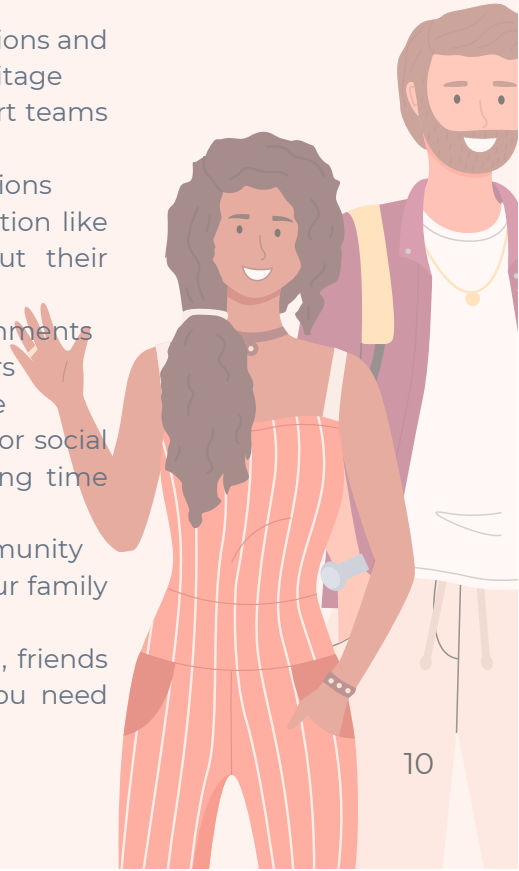
- Drink plenty of **water** (preferably 8 glasses a day)
 - Exercise** regularly (ride a bike, take a walk, go hiking etc.)
 - Take your **multivitamins**
 - Get between 7- 8 hours of **sleep**
 - Limit** your usage of alcohol
 - Eat** a balanced diet
 - Limit snacking** and cut back on sugars
 - Incorporate more **vegetables and fruits** in your diet
 - Avoid** tobacco products
 - Have **regular visits** to the doctor
- 

SOCIAL WELLNESS

Achieving **social wellness as a student is essential for maintaining a balanced and fulfilling life.** Social wellness involves building and maintaining positive and meaningful relationships with others while also developing strong communication and interpersonal skills.

THINGS YOU CAN DO TO HELP YOU ACHIEVE SOCIAL WELLNESS AS A BIPOC STUDENT:

- Participate** in social events organized by your school or community
- Engage** in cultural events, traditions and activities that celebrate your heritage
- Join clubs**, organizations or sport teams that align with your interests
- Actively engage** in class discussions
- Volunteer** with a local organization like TAYFFI and be informed about their programs
- Collaborate** with peers on assignments
- Initiate** conversations with others
- Balance** your social media usage
- Create a schedule** that allows for social interactions while also dedicating time to your studies
- Find a mentor** within your community
- Create time to **connect** with your family and friends
- Seek support** from your family, friends or counseling services when you need help



FINANCIAL WELLNESS

Achieving financial wellness as a BIPOC youth in Canada requires a combination of **financial knowledge, discipline and planning.**

TIPS FOR FINANCIAL WELLNESS

Financial Education:

Stay informed about personal finance through books, podcasts, and videos. Understand the tax system to optimize your financial situation.

Goal Setting:

Set both long-term and short-term financial goals.

Budgeting:

Create and maintain a budget to track income and expenses.

Financial Tracking

Keep a record of spending habits to identify potential savings.

Professional Guidance:

Seek advice from financial advisors, especially those experienced with BIPOC individuals.

Savings Culture:

Cultivate a regular saving habit to build financial security.

Resource Exploration:

Research available grants, programs, and benefits, including employment opportunities.

Financial Protection:

Ensure adequate insurance coverage for yourself and your assets, and understand credit scores for better financial management.

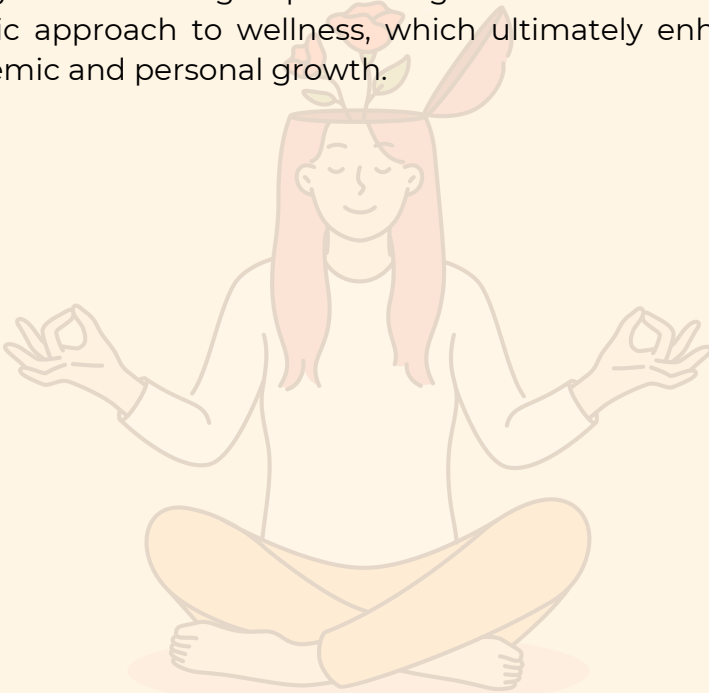


IN SUMMARY...

This guide aims to **empower BIPOC immigrant youth on their wellness journey, encouraging them to embrace their identity, celebrate their heritage, and seek support when needed.** It emphasizes the importance of addressing **four key pillars of academic wellness: mental, physical, social, and financial well-being.** These aspects are interconnected and crucial for a balanced life.

Mental well-being aids in stress management and maintaining positive relationships, while physical health contributes to overall vitality. Social connections provide a support network, and financial well-being fosters stability and independence.

The guide encourages prioritizing these elements for a holistic approach to wellness, which ultimately enhances academic and personal growth.



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

University/College student support

- [Government of Saskatchewan Student Support](#)
- [Saskatchewan Polytechnic](#)
- [University of Saskatchewan](#)
- [University of Regina](#)
- [First Nations University of Canada](#)
- [University of Saskatchewan Student Support](#)
- [Truly Alive Youth and Family Foundation](#)

- **Mental health helplines/ counseling services**
- [Government of Canada](#)
- [Government of Saskatchewan](#)
- [Truly Alive Youth and Family Foundation](#)
- [University of Saskatchewan](#)
- [Talk Suicide Canada helpline](#) or dial 1.833.456.4566/ SMS 45645
- [Gov't of Saskatchewan Suicide prevention](#) or dial 811
- [Saskatchewan Polytechnic](#)
- [University of Regina](#)

Study breaks time tracker

- Pomodoro [timer](#) is a free timer that reminds you to take short breaks in between tasks.

Language programs

- [Government of Saskatchewan](#)
 - [University of Regina](#)
- (This program is free to students of the University)
- [Saskatchewan Polytechnic](#)
- (This program is free to students of the Polytechnic)
- [University of Saskatchewan](#)
- (This program is not free to students but has [funding opportunities](#))
- [Truly Alive Youth and Family Foundation](#)

Job boards/Job search sites

- [Job Bank](#)
- [Sask Jobs](#)
- [Indeed](#)
- [LinkedIn](#)



DAILY PLANNER

DATE: / /

MOST IMPORTANT TASK

TODAY'S TASKS

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

APPOINTMENTS

WATER INTAKE 

MOOD TRACKER    

MEALS & SNACKS	
BREAK FAST	
LUNCH	
DINNER	
SNACK	

REMINDERS & NOTES

BUDGET *Planner*

MONTH _____

YEAR _____

INITIAL BALANCE _____

ENDING BALANCE _____

INCOME

DATE	DESCRIPTION	AMOUNT
TOTAL		

EXPENSES

DATE	DESCRIPTION	AMOUNT
TOTAL		

SUMMARY

TOTAL INCOME	TOTAL EXPENSES	ENDING BALANCE

NOTES

REFERENCES

- Baylor University. (n.d.). Student Stress Scale. Retrieved July 24, 2023 from <https://www.baylor.edu/content/services/document.php/183433.p>
- CAMH. (n.d.). Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD). Retrieved July 20, 2023 from Health Info: [https://www.camh.ca/en/health-info/mental-illness-and-addiction-index/seasonal-affective-disorder#:~:text=Seasonal%20affective%20disorder%20is%20a,therapy\)%20may%20help%20reduce%20symptoms.](https://www.camh.ca/en/health-info/mental-illness-and-addiction-index/seasonal-affective-disorder#:~:text=Seasonal%20affective%20disorder%20is%20a,therapy)%20may%20help%20reduce%20symptoms.)
- Kaur, S. (2022, October 21). Struggle Of International Students In Canada You Must Know! From Immigration News Canada: <https://immigrationnewscanada.ca/struggle-of-international-students-in-canada-you-must-know/>
- McMAster University. (n.d.). Ways to Wellness. Retrieved July 15, 2023 from Student Wellness Center: <https://wellness.mcmaster.ca/services/health-promotion/campaigns/ways-to-wellness/>
- The JED Foundation. (n.d.). Understanding Academic Stress in College. Retrieved July 18th, 2023 from The JED Foundation: <https://jedfoundation.org/resource/understanding-academic-stress/>
- Western University. (n.d.). Financial Wellness. Retrieved July 18th, 2023 from International Students and Wellness: <https://iwellness.uwo.ca/financial/index.html>
- Williams, D. R. (2018). Stress and the Mental Health of Populations of Color: Advancing Our Understanding of Race-related Stressors. *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*, 59(4), 466-485. doi:10.1177/0022146518814251

TAKE
time for
your
SELF